



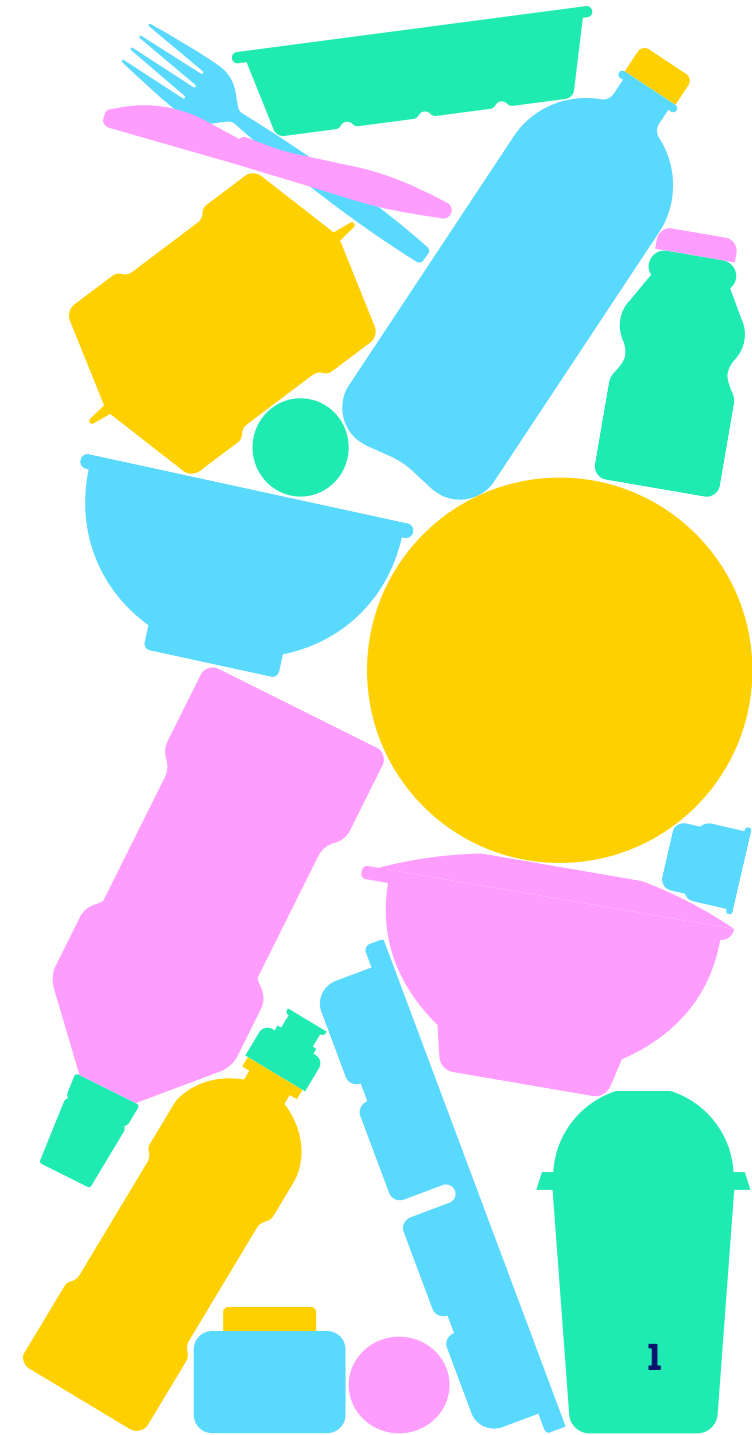
ELIMINATING PROBLEM PLASTICS



PROBLEM PLASTICS

So what's the solution? The UK Plastics Pact is blazing a trail. Its members are responsible for 85% of plastic packaging sold through UK supermarkets and have pledged to take actions to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging items by 2025.

However, unintended consequences must be avoided. Specifically, substituting another material should not create any additional environmental impact and food waste should not increase as a result of changes in packaging.



WHY?

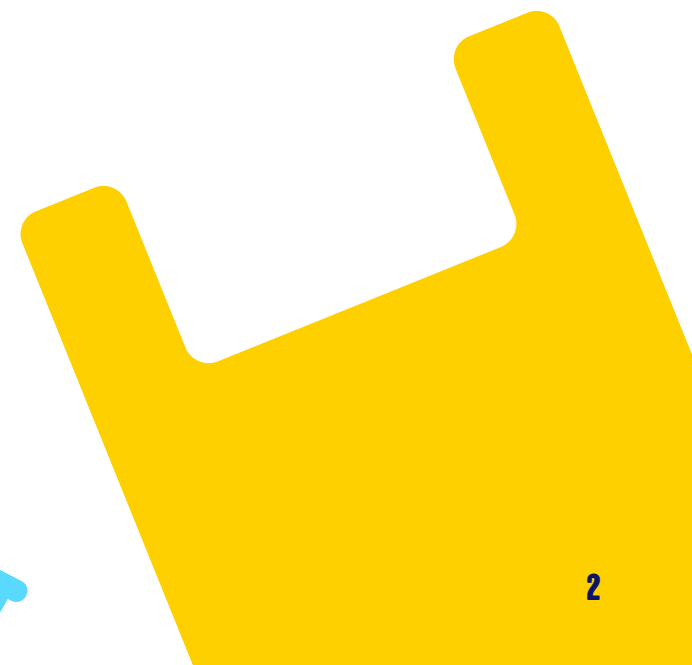
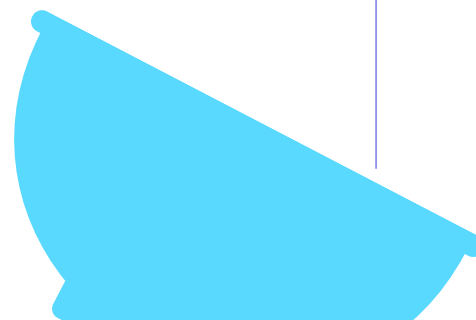
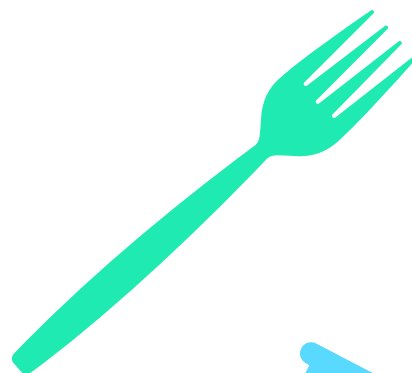
APPETITE FOR CHANGE

Members of The UK Plastics Pact acknowledge and share the undeniable public appetite for change over the environmental consequences of plastic waste.

It is also important to recognise the frustration and confusion felt by consumers who want to make the right choices.

The public believes everyone – from consumers to manufacturers and retailers – is responsible for tackling plastic waste.

Helping consumers “to do the right thing” is a key element of the Pact’s strategy.



FIRST STEPS

DEFINING ‘PROBLEMATIC AND UNNECESSARY PLASTICS’?

Top retailers, brands and other businesses, determined to make ‘significant progress’ in this area, joined The UK Plastics Pact.

Their first trailblazing action was to sign up to four actionable and measurable targets, with Target 1 being to “eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models by 2025”.

The UK Plastics Pact targets:

1. Eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models.
2. 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable.
3. 70% of plastic packaging effectively recycled or composted.
4. 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.

We all need to move away from a linear approach of take, make and dispose of plastic, towards a circular system where plastic is valued and never enters our natural environment.

Plastic packaging can be problematic or unnecessary:

- If its use is avoidable or reusable options are available;
- if it's not recyclable or hampers the recycling process; or
- if it pollutes our environment.

An action group of UK Plastics Pact members defined the term problematic or unnecessary as “Single-use plastic items where consumption could be avoided through elimination, reuse or replacement and items that, post-consumption, commonly do not enter recycling and composting systems, or where they do, are not recycled due to their format, composition or size.”

This approach, of having a more circular system, anticipated elements of the UK Government's recent ban on the the distribution and sale of plastic straws, drink stirrers and cotton buds in its 2018 consultation; as well as the European Union's Single-Use Plastic Directive agreed in Spring 2019.

Pact members are striving to eliminate these items by the end of 2020 where technically possible.

There are some necessary exemptions and for some items it will take longer. For example, technological developments are required for straws used in cartons, expanded polystyrene in non-food packaging, or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in pharmaceutical packaging. There are also social and medical reasons to consider, for example the provision of plastic straws for those with a specific disability.

THE EIGHT TO GO

The UK Plastics Pact has identified the following plastic items to be eliminated.

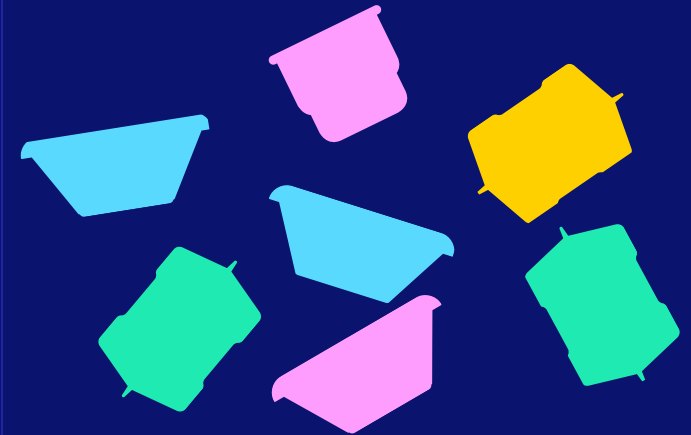
This is because there are no practical options, such as better design or smarter recycling systems, which can make them environmentally acceptable.

DISPOSABLE PLASTIC CUTLERY



Along with straws and stirrers, disposable plastic cutlery are frequently found littered on beaches. Wherever possible reusable cutlery should be used, otherwise alternative materials adopted.

ALL POLYSTYRENE PACKAGING

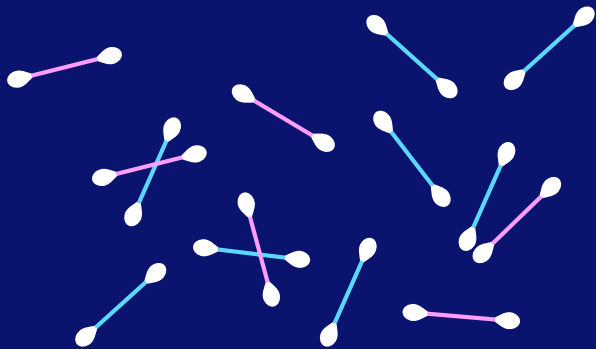


Polystyrene is not recycled in the UK. It is often used for food takeaway containers and yoghurt pots and to package white goods like microwaves. Alternative materials can be used.

THE EIGHT TO GO

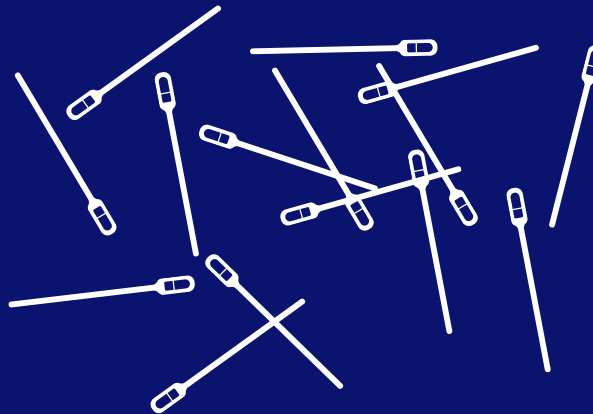
The distribution and sale of the three items listed on this page are to be banned from April 2020 following the UK Government's 2018 consultation.

COTTON BUDS WITH PLASTIC STEMS



Cotton buds are often found during beach clean ups. While citizens need to play their part and not flush these down the toilet, there is no reason that the plastic cannot be substituted with card or other fibrous materials.

PLASTIC STIRRERS



In many cases plastic stirrers could be substituted with an alternative material, or even a metal spoon that can be washed and reused.

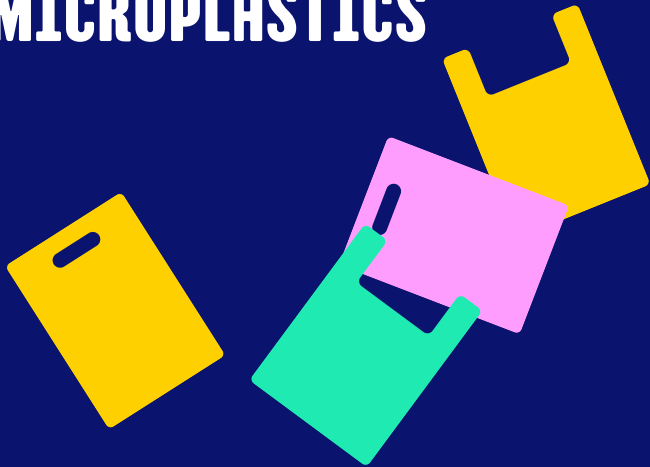
PLASTIC STRAWS



In most circumstances the use of a plastic straw is unnecessary and they don't get recycled. Alternative materials can be used. The recent government ban will include exemptions to ensure that those people with medical needs are able to continue to access plastic straws.

THE EIGHT TO GO

OXO-DEGRADABLES THAT BREAK DOWN TO CREATE MICROPLASTICS



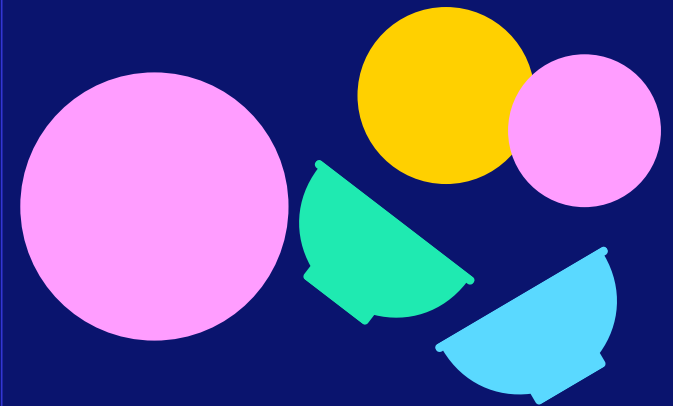
Oxo-degradable plastics fragment into microplastics which contribute to plastic pollution. This material is difficult for citizens to identify. We should explore reusable alternatives wherever possible and otherwise consider compostable or recyclable plastics.

PVC PACKAGING



PVC is a plastic which is problematic when used for and within packaging because it is not recyclable and it also contaminates plastic which could otherwise be recycled. It can be found in various forms, such as meat trays, plastic film around mushrooms or blister packs; there is little way for citizens to identify it. Outside of packaging it has many valid applications, for example for doors and windows.

DISPOSABLE PLASTIC PLATES AND BOWLS



Disposable plastic plates and bowls are designed to be used just once. They should be replaced with reusable options.

WHAT NEXT?

AND THAT'S NOT ALL

To maintain momentum and underline this world-leading initiative, more items and materials are now being actively investigated. Members are required to develop and adopt solutions to address the issues through reuse, redesign and/or smarter recycling by 2025.

These include drinks bottles, non-detectable black plastic packaging which doesn't get picked up in the recycling process, and a range of flexible plastics and films in everyday use (see table in appendix for full list).

For each of these items, Pact members will assess whether the following actions can justify continuing use:

- **Avoidable** – can it be avoided in the context within which it is being used?
- **Replacement** with reusable or alternative options
- **Design** – selecting the type of plastic, design and manufacture to increase recyclability (using recycled content where practicable)
- **Investment** in labelling, messaging and collections/recycling infrastructure to boost retrieval and recycling

This means that if the reasons why an item is considered 'problematic or unnecessary' can be overcome – or if the benefits of its use outweigh the impact – members may decide not to eliminate it.



THE FUTURE

A CONSIDERED APPROACH

The further list of items to be investigated will be kept under constant review by The UK Plastics Pact to ensure the target of eliminating problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging is met by 2025.

UK Plastics Pact members have started to address the issue of problematic or unnecessary plastics for example removing plastic packaging where it is not deemed necessary and redesigning packaging to be recyclable.

A considered approach is critical in developing the evidence to ensure there are no unintended consequences, and this evidence will be gathered and published. Pact members will be reporting progress against the specific items already identified as part of Target 1. It will be the responsibility of all Pact members to undertake the actions that work for their businesses, supported by WRAP.



APPENDIX

ITEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED

For the list of items on the following pages, members are developing and adopting solutions to address the issues through reuse, redesign and/or smarter recycling by 2025

PLASTIC ITEM	WHY THE ITEM IS CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY	KEY ACTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER ¹
Plastic bags, including carrier bags and fresh produce bags	Avoidable. Limited film recycling.	Avoid where possible. Encourage customers to avoid them. Motivate and educate citizens to recycle, including through on-pack labelling and link to RecycleNow.com to help people find out where to recycle them.
Plastic film packaging e.g. crisps, fruit and vegetable film packaging	In some cases film packaging could be avoided where food waste doesn't increase as a result. Film recycling in the UK is limited.	Trials and research to investigate when packaging is required, whilst ensuring that food waste will not increase as a result. Explore particular opportunities where providing loose produce may help reduce food waste. Expansion/development and promotion (including through on-pack labelling) of film recycling, including through supermarket collection points.
Multi-layer non-recyclable plastics e.g. pouches	Not widely recycled.	Redesign to be recyclable. Invest in/improve non-mechanical recycling infrastructure.
Multi-pack rings for canned drinks	Potentially avoidable. Not currently recycled.	Redesign where possible e.g. using glue. Explore options to recycle with other plastic films.

¹ Note that all actions are subject to avoiding unintended consequences, e.g. increasing environmental impact through alternative choices and/or redesign

APPENDIX

ITEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED (CONT.)

PLASTIC ITEM	WHY THE ITEM IS CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY	KEY ACTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER ¹
Multi-veg/fruit net bags e.g. for citrus and some vegetables	In some cases could be avoided. Not currently recycled.	Avoid where possible – offer loose options. Explore design options – recyclable or compostable materials.
Multi-buy bulk (secondary) wrapping e.g. multipack crisps packaging and tins	Not widely recycled. Packaging sometimes excessive.	Reduce any excess packaging (e.g. head space) to be fit for purpose and remove any unnecessary layers of packaging. Investigate innovative ways of selling multiples/larger packs to consumers that avoid additional packaging.
PVC cling film	PVC is a contaminant to the recycling process.	Adoption of non-PVC cling film. Encourage citizens to use re-usable options.
Bottle tops/caps	Frequently not recycled as the public are unsure about what to do with these items. These items can also be lost in the recycling process due to their small size. Item frequently littered.	Redesign bottles to tether bottle tops to the bottle ² . Advise the public on replacing tops before recycling. Invest in recycling processes to collect loose bottle tops.

¹ Note that all actions are subject to avoiding unintended consequences, e.g. increasing environmental impact through alternative choices and/or redesign

² EU Directive

APPENDIX

ITEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED (CONT.)

PLASTIC ITEM	WHY THE ITEM IS CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY	KEY ACTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER ¹
Single-use drinks bottles	Not always recycled, particularly away from home. Item frequently littered. Potential for reuse/refill options in some circumstances.	Provide reuse options where appropriate. Motivate and educate citizens to recycle (with caps attached), including through on-pack labelling and link to RecycleNow.com to help people find out where to recycle them.
Non-recyclable coloured plastics (including carbon black plastic e.g. some ready-meal trays, premium meat trays, some prepacked fish trays)	Carbon black plastic is not detected for recycling by equipment used in the sorting/recycling process.	Brands and retailers are advised to move away from non-recyclable carbon black plastic into clear plastic, alternative colours or detectable black by the end of 2019. Recyclers are requested to adjust their equipment to ensure 'detectable colours' are sorted for recycling by the end 2019.
Fruit and veg punnets/trays e.g. grape, tomato, mushroom etc.	The use of plastic could be avoided in some instances where food waste would not increase as a result. Not all are recycled.	Conduct trials and research to investigate alternatives, whilst considering other environmental impacts, such as increased carbon and increased food waste as result of changes. Consider selling some items loose where this doesn't create food waste. Invest in UK recycling for plastic PET trays. Motivate and educate citizens to recycle, including through on-pack labelling and link to RecycleNow.com to help people find out where to recycle them.

¹ Note that all actions are subject to avoiding unintended consequences, e.g. increasing environmental impact through alternative choices and/or redesign

APPENDIX

ITEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED (CONT.)

PLASTIC ITEM	WHY THE ITEM IS CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY	KEY ACTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER ¹
Internal plastic trays e.g. trays for premium biscuits	Sometimes avoidable. Can be made from plastics that are not recyclable.	Avoid where possible or design to ensure they are recyclable. Motivate and educate citizens to recycle, including through on-pack labelling and link to RecycleNow.com to help people find out where to recycle them.
Disposable plastic cups	Designed to be used just once. Often not recycled, particularly when used outside of the home due to lack of recycling collections.	Explore re-usable alternatives. Improved recycling collections.
Fruit/veg stickers	Contaminates compost. Not recycled.	Substitute materials, e.g. compostable. Avoid where possible.
Plastic cup lids (from hot beverage cups)	These lids are often made from a type of plastic which is not recyclable. They are also often not recycled by citizens.	Redesign with a substitute polymer, e.g. Polypropylene. Provision of recycling services, possibly included in coffee cup recycling. Explain and motivate citizens to recycle where appropriate. Offer reuse alternatives.

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APPENDIX

ITEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED (CONT.)

PLASTIC ITEM	WHY THE ITEM IS CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY	KEY ACTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER ¹
Plastic coffee pods	Generally not recycled because of their small size and also because they contain coffee.	Redesign. Possibly use compostable plastic. Develop recycling infrastructure. Explore options for pod-less coffee machines.
Milk and salad dressing jiggers, single serving pots and sachets e.g. used in on-the-go salads, milk sticks, condiments, cosmetics and samples	Potentially avoidable. Often made from plastic that is not recycled and items are too small to be detected in the recycling process to get recycled.	Avoid where possible and provide re-usable alternatives e.g. jug of milk, sauce dispensers. Consider substitute materials, including investigating compostable alternatives. Advancements in recycling sorting processes to enable detection.
Tear off tamper evident strips on containers	Not recycled.	Redesign to remove them or use alternative materials e.g. paper.
Teabags	These can contain or be made from non-degradable plastic and so contaminate compost when they are recycled with food waste. Non-degradable plastic is sometimes used in 'normal' tea bags, as well as those made from fabric.	Redesign to use compostable materials. Motivate and educate citizens to place tea bags in food waste/ composting, including through on-pack labelling.

¹ Note that all actions are subject to avoiding unintended consequences, e.g. increasing environmental impact through alternative choices and/or redesign

THANK YOU

WRAP's vision is a world in which resources are used sustainably.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through re-inventing how we design, produce and sell products; re-thinking how we use and consume products; and re-defining what is possible through reuse and recycling.

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The UK Plastics Pact is led by WRAP with the support of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The UK Plastics Pact was co-created by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and WRAP to accelerate the transition to a circular economy for plastics in the UK and is one of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's national and regional implementation initiatives around the world. The opinions expressed, and materials made available, by WRAP or EMF or The UK Plastics Pact signatories do not necessarily reflect the views of the other parties who are not responsible for the same.

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